

Old Trinity Church  
Church Creek  
Dorchester County  
Maryland

HABS No. MD-201

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAN DNA DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Washington Office, Division of Design and Construction  
Washington 25, D. C.

Old Trinity Episcopal Church  
Dorchester County  
Maryland

HABS No. MD-201

Old Trinity Episcopal Church

Address: Located near Church Creek, 7 miles W. of Cambridge,  
Dorchester County, Maryland

Present Owner: Protestant Episcopal Church

Present Use: Reportedly the oldest church in America now in  
active use.

Brief Statement

of Significance: Old Trinity Church has been carefully restored to  
its original appearance in the late seventeenth century and furnished  
according to orders of Queen Anne issued in 1703. The restoration was  
carried forward, 1953-1960 as a memorial to Walter Percy Chrysler and  
his wife, Della Viola Forker, by their daughter, Bernice and her  
husband, Colonel Edgar William Garbisch. The Garbisches are residents  
of Dorchester County.

Historical and Architectural Information: Old Trinity was probably  
built around 1675. It is the first church of record in Dorchester  
County and Lord Baltimore's report of 1677 covering the state of  
religion in Maryland, noted that "every county of the Province" had  
sufficient number of churches. Research indicates this Church shares  
many construction details of a house on nearby John's Point known to  
have been erected in 1665. Presumably both are the work of the same  
builder so far unidentified by name.

Examination of the building showed that the south transcript  
had been an eighteenth century addition and this was removed. A bulg-  
ing north wall had to be replaced, but on the whole a remarkable

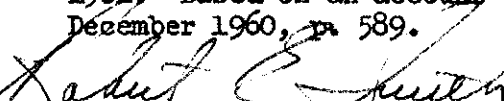
percentage of the original fabric remained intact to testify to the structure's original form. On the basis of archeological and construction evidence, the Church stands as a rectangular building having a semi-circular apse at the east end. The nave measures 38 feet by 20 feet and is covered by a vaulted ceiling under a pitched roof. The casement windows and the main door in the west end, were indicated by surviving evidence of lintels revealed when the walls were stripped. A large section of the early brick floor, laid on sand and oyster shells, was discovered intact beneath later flooring.

In pursuit of English prototypes, Colonel and Mrs. Garbisch discovered in the Church of Saint Savior, near Repton, Derbyshire, built about 1660 and virtually the same size, with many similar features as Old Trinity. Louis Osman, English architect for the restoration of Saint Savior's, served in collaboration with Colonel Garbisch on the Maryland project.

Documentary research at Fulham Palace, residence of the Bishop of London contributed valuable data. Cushions for the reading desk, "a cushion and cloth for the pulpit, and "a carpet for the altar, all in crimson damask with silk fringe were sent to Trinity as bounty from Queen Anne. These specifications have recently been refilled. The frame of the seventeenth century communion table survived the years and again serves its intended purpose.

Prepared by: Worth Bailey, Architectural Historian, HABS, February, 1961, Based on an account in Antiques Magazine, December 1960, p. 589.

Approved by:

  
Chief Architect

Date 2-20-61